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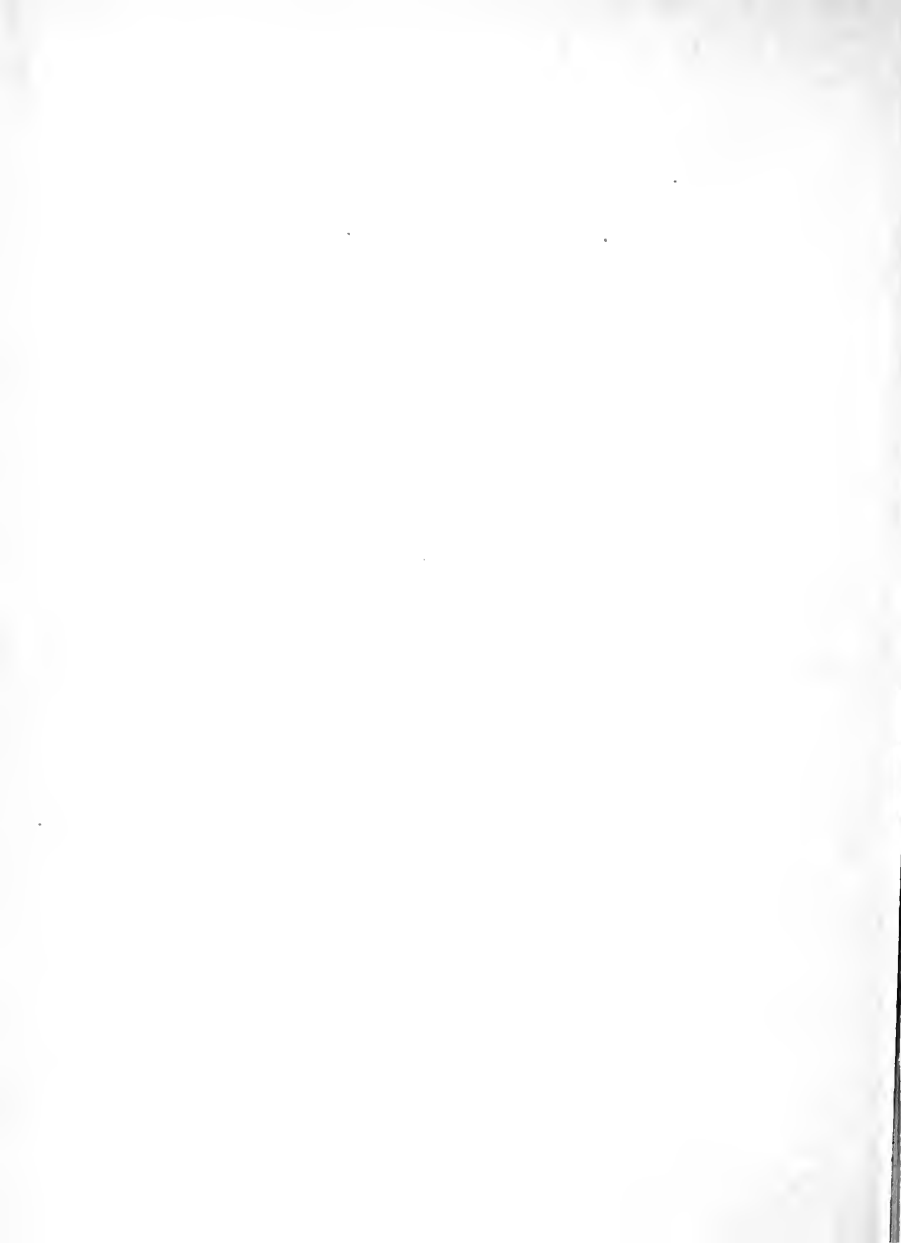


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The Hunter
and other Poems



The Hunter
and other Poems
By W. J. Turner

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TO

FRANCIS MEYNELL

1022/135

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W. J. T.

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Romance

WHEN I was but thirteen or so
I went into a golden land,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Took me by the hand.

My father died, my brother too,
They passed like fleeting dreams,
I stood where Popocatepetl
In the sunlight gleams.

I dimly heard the master's voice
And boys far-off at play,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had stolen me away.

I walked in a great golden dream
To and fro from school—
Shining Popocatepetl
The dusty streets did rule.

I walked home with a gold dark boy
And never a word I'd say,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had taken my speech away :

I gazed entranced upon his face
Fairer than any flower—
O shining Popocatpetl
It was thy magic hour :

The houses, people, traffic seemed
Thin fading dreams by day,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
They had stolen my soul away !

Spain

MORNING

THE orange glooms in the half-dawn,
The white walls are pale glimmering dreams,
Trees haunt them, stream-still, dim-illumed
With round gold fruit on green boughs born.

Mist-pearl the Guadalquivir lies
Shimmering, dropt from the pale heaven ;
Star-drunken, a god-ecstatic fool
Mumbling divine, night-dwindling cries.

Passionately the dim Dawn fills
With purple heaps of shadows : Trees,
Their vapour-sleep about their knees,
Dream gem-still on the luminous hills.

Green fires jewel-blazed mid milk-white walls
Bloom from the pale transparent air ;
The sunlight flickers on their spires,
The night's dark mirage-tower falls.

On a glittering plain
Far away,
A bony horse with an armoured knight
Labours ; his squire behind
Toils and sweats with his ass.

A solitary Tree,
A gesture 'in the sunlight
Mournful but determined,
A song in the dark
Without gaiety,
A shadow in the white dust !

It is their hope,
It is mirrored in their souls,
In the soul of the bony horse,
In the soul of the ass.

Under the Tree lies the squire,
His mouth is open and his soul
Flutters over empty wineskins ;
The knight leans against the trunk,
The horse and the ass are as still
As fallen branches.

NOON—SIESTA

THE lattices are shut,
The house is dark and still . . .
The soul can wander up and down
And work its own will,
Phantom after phantom chase,
Glide from dream to dream,
Quiet as the shadow of a hill
In a slow stream.

Kings, Princesses, Warriors stark,
All in dream array
Of glittering lances, banners bright
On a great highway,
On the highway lit by no
Sun or Stars or Moon
Through curtained chambers wind their way
Like a bright tune—

Like a tune with many places
Empty, soundless, dark ;
There broods the Dove, moored in those places,
The Spirit's ancient ark
On the waters faintly shining
High and mournful with black walls
Gleams a ghost, a phantom vessel
Ere the next note falls.

In this stream, in this procession,
Toledo, Saragossa, names
Of Castile and of Aragon
Leap dream-fitful flames,
Arks of human life their dark Towers
Gloomy in the blazing sunlight,
Piercing with blood-tortured thoughts
A sky serene and bright.

Many centuries have passed
Since the Knight and the Squire lay dreaming,
The one of Toledo, Saragossa, Princesses and Giants,
The other of wineskins ;
But they are still wandering in Spain,
You may see them any day
Under a tree.

EVENING

AND when night comes they will sing serenades
Under the open windows,
The lattices will not be shut,
The Moon will wander through the houses :
Spain herself with the voices of the past in her soul
Will sit in the shadows,
And kiss the petals of roses,
And drop them warm to her lovers below.

With the low thrumming of guitars,
With the gold throbbing of stars,
With the purple heaving of the seas,
With the glimmer of fading white walls
She drops her dusky hair over my soul ;
O Spain I am soul-drunken with thee,
I am intoxicated with the scent of thy garments,
I am a river delirious under the Moon
In whose bosom forests and stars and maidens
And innumerable worlds are singing.

With the low thrumming of guitars,
With white arms hanging from the lattices
From clouds of dim hair indistinguishable from the
night

The souls of the serenaders are drunken,
Their voices murmur heavily like beetles
Wandering in a blur of flowers :
Spain is glimmering in those white arms,
The flowers float up in the dim darkness,
The shadows fill with her hair ;
She has escaped into the palpitating night
Leaving a heap of scented garments—
In her dark room weeps the moonlight.

The night is empty, emptier is the day,
That secret loveliness has passed away ;
The sun is burning and the houses lie
Bare and untidy to the airless sky,
The sea is glass, a smooth and glittering pane,
The flies sleep in the dust. This is Spain.

Ecstasy

I SAW a frieze on whitest marble drawn
Of boys who sought for shells along the shore,
Their white feet shedding pallor in the sea,
The shallow sea, the spring-time sea of green
That faintly creamed against the cold, smooth
pebbles.

The air was thin, their limbs were delicate,
The wind had graven their small eager hands
To feel the forests and the dark nights of Asia
Behind the purple bloom of the horizon,
Where sails would float and slowly melt away.

Their naked, pure, and grave, unbroken silence
Filled the soft air as gleaming, limpid water
Fills a spring sky those days when rain is lying
In shattered bright pools on the wind-dried roads,
And their sweet bodies were wind-purified.

One held a shell unto his shell-like ear
And there was music carved in his face,
His eyes half-closed, his lips just breaking open
To catch the lulling, mazy, coralline roar
Of numberless caverns filled with singing seas.

And all of them were hearkening as to singing
Of far-off voices thin and delicate,
Voices too fine for any mortal wind
To blow into the whorls of mortal ears—
And yet those sounds flowed from their grave, sweet
faces.

And as I looked I heard that delicate music,
And I became as grave, as calm, as still
As those carved boys. I stood upon that shore,
I felt the cool sea dream around my feet,
My eyes were staring at the far horizon :

And the wind came and purified my limbs,
And the stars came and set within my eyes,
And snowy clouds rested upon my shoulders,
And the blue sky shimmered deep within me,
And I sang like a carved pipe of music.

Fantasie

SILENCE ! A great crowd sits and waits,
Tier upon tier in circles strangely mute ;
The air hangs limp and almost visible,
Pregnant with power unuttered :

A Stick is waving silently— — —
Three trembling jewels fell shining midst our
thoughts
Leaving a glitter from another world :
Then three more fell, and then the throbbing air
Awoke and sang, and stretched its rope-like throat
And beat and beat against that domèd roof :
Dark wings shot out and struck to bear it up,
The place was full of multitudinous striving ;
I was tossed hither thither in uneasy effort
As in a cloud of dreams ; but suddenly
Our prison burst, and to the lidless sky
We raced and raced until the soft soft blue
Tore at our shoulders, ripped our aching flesh,
Laid bare our soul to burn, catch fire and blaze,
Exultingly suck in the azure air
And fill the spacy nothingness of heaven
With the distract, disruptive power of passion ;
Till little wisps of clouds did madly pluck
Themselves in fragments, jangling stars did dance,
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And a whole firmament of glass and metal
Cracked up and shivered, jarring wayside stones
And vitreous spangles hid in loam and clay ;
Till gently glittering, trembling up and down,
We shook together, filled a mobile lake
With soft and shimmering waters—Flash !
We smoothly lie
Unruffled to the calm and breathless sky
Where nothing sails :

No Cloud no Ship, no Bird—
Only a thought comes winging keen and gay,
A thought that will not stay
To be remembered or even known
When it hath passed its way.
It sings itself so joyously in space
Bubbling like spirit water, frail and thin,
Which eager hands may seek in vain to trace,
Close, holding nothing in,
Nothing, just nothing—O something escapes,
Something has vanished, shut wings up like a lark,
And fallen in the dust,
And left a gap
Where strings are faintly stirred.
Where strings are stirring faint and rhythmically
Like the slow beat of oars that wider sweep
And wider still and though no ship there be

Yet we set sail—the currents eddy round
And close above our heads.

Drowned ! Drowned !

Engulfed in consciousness so vast and free
We move like swaying forms within the sea,
Or we are like the sea that flows through all
Anemones, transparent flowers, tall
And waving daughters, crowding thick tip-toe
Upon a rock to see the Nautilus go
Into the dim translucent worlds that wane
With shadows, to light up again
With a pale glow that travels—O so far !
We follow, follow, follow, hunt the gleam
That radiates our world, that bathes our arms,
Slips round our bodies, glints within our eyes,
And then withdraws—Fades ! Fades ! Fades !
And without movement dies.

I can still hear the beating of the oars,
I can still hear the stirring of the strings,
I can still see the rhythmic swaying tide,
And the pale anemones,
And the Nautilus,
And the Green Gleam.
Who wanders there where your tall daughters stare
And lifts their eyelids, spreads their streaming hair
To ripple with the unwrinkled waving light

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That runs like green blood through all plants and
flowers,
Or glows opaquely in some fish's side
Like a dense jewel floating by ?—
I ask but no one answers ; all is still ;
For they are no man's daughters, no one knows
How they wait ever, standing tip-toe there
While all the world through their frail bodies flows,
Ebbs from their finger-tips—Swells—and Sways,
Hanging upon their lips, and rocks them all
In rooted motion—Sea-urchins, sea-farers, in among
the sea-sunflowers,
In among the ox-rays, the trepang and the colander :
The polyps spread their fringe of arms, the drunken
algæ reel around
Far from the dipping guillemot—O they fade and fade
And there is but a web of woven streams
Where images are blurred ; dim rain-drops fall,
Dim, shuddering drops of white and violet light.
I hear the thunder call ;
It swells, it comes,
And tramping feet come with it—O beware !
These halls of quietness are not long to hold
Their weeping daughters, pale, inviolate ;
The Wind's tumultuous feet are at the gate,
They come, they come, to break your tender stems,
To wound your swaying mouths and trample down
Your bleeding bodies, tear your coral veins

And stain the purple bottom of the sea
With shrieking patterns. What ecstatic pains
Uplift you now and bring that vanished gleam
Flickering like June lightning ? Louder grow
Those multitudinous feet ! O blindly gape,
Strain forth your bodies' ichor, lean to them
Who come to pluck you with invisible hands ;
So shall you flower and the last flying gleam
Shall kiss your scattered blossoms.—
The whole sea moves, its waters tumbling down
In green and purple columns drown my sight ;
I catch a glimpse of wan and fleeting forms
Tossing a handful of dishevelled jewels,
Or glittering bubbles—then thick masses dim,
In semicircles ranged, opaque and dark,
Emerge, and with a muffled tap of drum
Move arms, show teeth, nod heads, and look like
men.

Le Sacre du Printemps

SPRING trembles on the hills and though the earth
Is grey and dark with silence and dim rains
Long bands of red and yellow ochre lie
Like corybants enswathed in vivid sashes
Under the soil that's fragrant with their presence.
The Winter widow-stolèd, grey and white,
Leans across hill and valley pensively
Weeping to leave those quiet, sober plains
Where gentle melancholy drapes her robes
In cloud and dripping wood. She is not mute,
But all her soul is gentle ; reverie
In tracts of cool rain-washed reflected light
Is more delectable to her than songs
Of any passion. When, dismayed, she hears
That note of longing bubbling to the sky
Shiv'ring she turns, retires with decent train
And leaves the earth all breathless, panting hard.
Quickened with such mad trembling ecstasy
Those corybants arise, yellow and red,
And shake their vivid sashes o'er the land ;
The world holds breath a moment ; then they dance,
Dance madly, whirling millions springing up
Tossing slim heads, their naked beauty bare
Intoxicating the blue laughing sky
To foam imagination—Cumuli,

Cloud-white creations frothed in empty space,
So insubstantial, of such dream-like weight
That if they moved they'd vanish. Then Desire
That sucks a wraith-like beauty visible
From nothingness, and out of ordure vile
Summons bright Forms to press against the wind
Their all-too-fleeting Symmetry,
Wakes in the hearts of men and scatters seeds
Of poignant loveliness so sweet, so rare
That springing up in some far-distant time
The world will dance in sharper ecstasy,
Flowers will be taller, cities hang like blooms
Upon the breast of earth, and men and women,
Like Gods in dazzling beauty, arm in arm,
White flesh to white flesh, bathe in sapphire seas
And rapturously hunt the spirit's jewel,
Green gleam of mariners that beckons far
More beautiful than purple-furrowed oceans
Or emerald isles—but hidden in their eyes
So that they never find its dwelling-place
Or cry Eureka ! resting on their oars.

Shipwreck

I HEARD a voice crying
In the wilderness of night ;
I saw great branches swaying,
Black boughs afloat on white
Intangible, thin light.

The light it never curdled
Into lips of foam,
Shook no green, shivering tresses
To drown seamen's caresses—
The dark Ship staggering home.

There came no rolling breakers,
No tall waves roaring high ;
But it was peaceful, peaceful,
And it was empty, empty ;
An Albatross was I.

An Albatross was I,
There was no sea nor sky,
No dark Ship plunging, plunging,
No dead men drifting by
Beneath that piercing cry :

But all was clear and silent,
Moon-empty round that thing,
That grey wind-glimmering wing
Drifting—

A Last Love Poem

MANY poems have I written unto thee, good
and bad,
And many more have I not uttered,
For the words came not. Ay, those feeble little
words
That leap so easily from the lips of the speaker
And fall dead upon the ground, they came not :
For they were fearful of the burden of my thought,
And my passion shrivelled them up as leaves in a hot
fire.
My thoughts were like lightning playing upon the
hills,
They hovered about thy beauty as lightning upon
the sea :
Pale, cold is thy beauty, aloof from the warm arms
of the earth,
Sparkling like a robe of jewels laid for the ghostly
moon :
No one shall joy of thee, only the black headlands
behold thee,
Staring like blind men in the night, haunted by the
lapping waves
For thy movements are like waves and all waters,
Mocking and stirring the senses even to where the
soul dwelleth,

Withdrawn to forgotten recesses, forgotten of thee
and the waters,
Careless of all thy cold beauty, hearing the wind's
soft voices,
And the warmth of the old earth breathing.

If in the cold dead darkness thine eyes should open
and seek me,
If in the dead white moonlight thou shouldst stir and
awaken,
If in all thy pale beauty thou shouldst stretch warm
arms forth to meet me
I would turn once again and love thee, forgetting the
wind's soft voices,
I would rise from the warm earth's bosom, shake the
dust from my feet and take thee
Envelop thee as in a garment and bury my face in
thy hair,
And kiss the blood to thy cheeks, and to thine eyes
and ears,
Till it danced through thy body like music :
I would grip thy pale little hands, hurting them ever
so slowly
Until thy lips parted beseeching, then would I kiss
them silent.
O thou soul of the world, words have I not nor music,
But a wild and flaming spirit that hunts like an out-
lawed robber

Building pillars of smoke in the lonely deserts of
night,
Seeking a vision of beauty, a haunting, far-off vision
That came to him once as he rode with the kisses of
dawn on his forehead.
And sudden and swift without warning the sea
stretched shining before him,
Not dead but awake and living, caressing the sleeping
earth
With a thousand tender touches—the earth all un-
conscious and sleeping :
Pale was the sea as thou art, a web of shadowed opal,
Soft and mysterious, quivering, with countless meshes
of light,
But alive with a soft exulting, a warm and passionate
greeting
As I stepped down and possessed thee, Aphrodite !
my long, long loved one !
And felt thy soft, timid embraces as in my wild
passion I kissed thee,
And kissed thee until thou wert silent and breathed
in my arms like a child.
And the world stopped still and the Morning,
In her golden chariot waiting, stood at the Eastern
Portal.

India

THEY hunt, the velvet tigers in the jungle,
The spotted jungle full of shapeless patches—
Sometimes they're leaves, sometimes they're hanging
flowers,
Sometimes they're hot gold patches of the sun :
They hunt, the velvet tigers in the jungle !

What do they hunt by glimmering pools of water,
By the round silver Moon, the Pool of Heaven :
In the striped grass, amid the barkless trees—
The Stars scattered like eyes of beasts above them !

What do they hunt, their hot breath scorching
insects,
Insects that blunder blindly in the way,
Vividly fluttering—they also are hunting,
Are glittering with a tiny ecstasy !

The grass is flaming and the trees are growing,
The very mud is gurgling in the pools,
Green toads are watching, crimson parrots flying,
Two pairs of eyes meet one another glowing—
They hunt, the velvet tigers in the jungle.

Ode to the Future

(To be read slowly)

I BEGIN with a question—What am I ?
And no answer reaches me out of thy vastness,
In thy abysses there is no one to heed me,
To catch my far-off, faint little wherefores—
Besides, thou knowest not.
O Future, wonderful, unimaginable, never to be
known,
What can I say unto thee that is not an imper-
tinence ?
This, that I am content,
I am content never to know thee, beautiful, adorable,
and gracious
I am content to die in a wretched and detestable time,
In a time when men are ugly to look upon,
And when women are more foolish than sparrows ;
When we seek but to enslave one another,
To spend our days in vain competition ;
When beauty is cast before swine,
And love is trampled underfoot !
Dirty, and foul, and evil-smelling,
We millions are an utter abomination,
Penned in our slum cities like cattle,
Wearing loathsome and disease-laden shoddy,

Eating filthy and disgusting food,
We would make the Gods vomit in Heaven !
But I am content.
I am content though soon I go down to the grave,
My sorrows given unto worms,
My joys put into a small hole.
I am content to be cast away,
To be flung into a handy field,
A heap of decaying lumber.
I am content to be finished for ever,
To have vanished with the millions before me
Like all the Summers that are gone.

Shall no one mourn for us, the departed ?
Yes, thou shalt mourn, thou, O magnanimous
Future !
In pity shalt thou think of us who are past.
But do not pity us.
I have no need of thy pity, O divine One !
O majestic and uplifting Time hearken unto me !
Hearken unto this voice whispering on the edge of
extinction !
I have conceived thee in my soul,
I am not a stranger to thy wonder and thy glory,
Nay, I have found thee in the bottom of my soul,
Out of the mud and the garbage did I lift thee up,
Thou wouldst never have been were it not for me.
Therefore, O Future, be humble,

Be humble in the splendour of thy Beauty
That so insignificant a one hath conceived thee,
And that thou canst not thank thy creators.
We who are working in the darkness rejoice,
Rejoice that no one shall bring us thanks,
No one shall shame us with gratitude.
It is enough that Thou, rising in thy loveliness
Art spread within the loneliness of our souls ;
In the awful silence that encompasses us,
Working like Phantoms in the night,
Thou art set as a lamp, as a voice that calleth over
the water

To the men in a dark-ringed Ship
Who know not whither they are going,
Who seek a Dream, a tale of Eldorado,
A Legend, a Wild-flower springing in the heart :
They call it Desire, Hope, I call it a Flower—
O Flower of the soul whence didst thou come to
delight us

So that we go down cheerfully into the dust,
Having stretched out our hands and preserved Thee,
Having cherished Thee for future generations ?
I know not. I understand nothing.
Everything is dark round about me.
I could weep bitter, bitter tears.
I am almost dissolved in sorrow—
Not sorrow for this or for that,
For love whose greeting is only a farewell,

For all the Springs that will come over my ashes
And the winter fires gleaming when I am gone.
No, I am sad with a profounder sorrow
Than that of my death and forgetting,
I weep for the death and forgetting of Man.
I see Man vanished, departed from the earth,
A Dream, a Forgotten Avenue,
A Pathway that led out of the night,
That is no more remembered in the morning.
But O beloved ! when thou and I are lying
Deep-cradled in the dissolving earth
With many, many generations
Shall we mourn that we are even less than names ?
Shall we mourn if the Future be not so beautiful as
our Desire ?
Are we not above mourning ?
Are we not greater than dust ?
Are we not stronger than a hope ?
Beloved I have found such beauty in thee,
I have found such beauty in the bottom of my soul
That I laugh, exulting in everything.
I exult in death and the destruction of Planets,
I exult in the blotting out of Empires and in the
slow extinction of Suns,
I exult in Thee who art to come,
I go into the grave crying Hail, O Future !
Hail thou world that art to come !
Hail thou to whom man is but a mollusc !

Across the æons I raise my voice to thee,
I am ready to be forgotten that thou shouldst come,
Or rather that I should come again.
Yes, for it is I that am coming in that far-off time,
I and my beloved though we know it not.
We are the Future, we are bringing the message of
the Past,
We are all that there is, everything depends upon us—
So let us go down into the grave rejoicing,
Rejoicing that they are but putting there lumps of
abandoned clay,
That we, we are elsewhere,
We are the Future.

Über allen Gipfeln

WHAT lies beyond ! The Moon
Hangs blood-red in the valley
Where below the swift black waters flow,
Roaring their unrest to the soundless snow,
Turning dark heads to snap their spuming fangs
Like wolves that howl as from a wood they go.
And there She overhangs—
So round, so red, so low.

Shall I too bare my teeth at thee, O Moon,
Now I have climbed so high
And these white Peaks are silent ? By and by
Perhaps they'll speak, or is this all they say,
This empty stare while the pale frozen sky
Sucks out thy colour until small and gray
Thy wan corpse faintly moves throughout the day !

Hast thou not lured me here with thy cold light,
Washing the mountains with a waveless flood,
Intangible, without a line or bubble,
But yet alive, filling the straining sight
With a strange brightness, filling the empty night
With a great splendour ! Pour out thy ebbing blood
Into my soul else thou escape and die,
My ardour lost and thou a frost-wraith white.

My arms close fast on nothing. Thou dost grow
Paler and yet more pale. The white Peaks gleam,
Shining like icy Ghosts across the snow
As thou removest high, removest high,
High out of reach, of thought, of hope—a Dream
That called me up the valley to these peaks,
To fade elusively into the sky.

The Hunter

"But there was one land he dared not enter"

BEYOND the blue, the purple seas,
Beyond the thin horizon's line,
Beyond Antilla, Hebrides,
Jamaica, Cuba, Caribbees
There lies the land of Yucatan.

The land, the land of Yucatan,
The low coast breaking into foam,
The dim hills where my thoughts shall roam
The forests of my boyhood's home,
The splendid dream of Yucatan !

I met thee first long, long ago
Turning a printed page, and I
Stared at a world I did not know
And felt my blood like fire flow
At that strange name of Yucatan.

O those sweet, far-off Austral days
When life had a diviner glow,
When hot Suns whipped my blood to know
Things all unseen, then I could go
Into thy heart O Yucatan !

I have forgotten what I saw,
I have forgotten what I knew,
And many lands I've set sail for
To find that marvellous spell of yore,
Never to set foot on thy shore
O haunting land of Yucatan !

But sailing I have passed thee by,
And leaning on the white ship's rail
Watched thy dim hills till mystery
Wrapped thy far stillness close to me
And I have breathed " 'tis Yucatan ! "


" 'Tis Yucatan, 'tis Yucatan ! "
The ship is sailing far away
The coast recedes, the dim hills fade,
A bubble-winding track we've made
And thou'rt a Dream O Yucatan !

Marah

BLUE and golden was her robe of mosaic,
Blue and golden the tips of her shoes,
The blurred wall gathered crystal lilies round her,
Green lilies, lilies of dimmed water :
There was no white, no milk-white touch about her,
All was lucent, was green and blue and gold.
There is no white about the name Mary,
Mary that is Marah—that is bitter,
Mary that sounds like running water
Tinkling like a host of muted bells
In cavities of tinkling-atomed limestone
Where, in a round clear drop of water,
Hang the tiny voices, the voices of the atoms,
Singing of Stalactites, of the loveliness of Mary.
Mary it is they dream of in the darkness of the
grotto,
Mary is the vision and the song inaudible
Where grow the Stalactites,
And the dimmer Stalagmites ;
It cannot be seen that they are growing,
In the darkness there is no glint or glitter,
Only the loveliness of Mary,
The conception and the bones of Mary.

A Madonna in Westminster

A GIRL before him knelt in silent prayer,
A stylish hat poised on her red-brown hair
Caught up behind in quite the latest mode
By a coquettish comb so that it showed
The warm smooth neck in shadow softly lit
By light reflected from the collar round it—
Pure dazzling linen, turned Medici-wise
Rigid and high to please fastidious eyes.
There, as she knelt in arching dark cloth shoes
And silken stockings, the dim hanging air
Curtained her round, incense proceeded from her
As if she were a holy shrine : he trembled ;
All the vast arches glimmered shadow-wise ;
Vague, insubstantial shone the gleaming stone ;
Life streamed in from the encircling universe
And gathered in great waves that softly swept
Through the dim aisles, up and down the nave,
Thundering softly like a myriad horse,
A myriad horse that scour a mystic plain
In muffled dreams at dawn. His soul bent down
And kissed her feet : then he saw her rise,
Sit for a moment, deftly try her hair,
Take out a glass—content that she was fair
Escaping from each movement, each svelt line
Of arm and fingers. Ay the world sat there,

The ancient world, the modern, very wise,
Sat in that mighty church and subtly drew
Its subtle fingers o'er the chords of life,
Drew melody from all the carven stones
That played like harps about her,
From the great heavy arches languor drew,
And glitter from the jewels of her that stood
Within the blue and gold mosaicked niche
Above the altar, drew from those great domes
A murmur as of droves of doves descending,
Whirl upon whirl, a cloud of fluttering feet
Filling invisibly the empty chairs—
His soul rose up and very swiftly swept
Through the dim nave, up and down the aisles
Like a great eagle filled with harmony
Of earth and sky and lifting in its rhythm
The little streams, the hum of rustling trees,
The tinkling waterfalls, the march of clouds,
The soundless ripples wrinkling flat-faced lakes
Expressionlessly set in shadowy rims,
The blue and hollow laughter of the sky,
The swift green flash of the rotating earth
And the mad tumbling waters of the sea,
Crystalline green and shattered, splintered white,
All, all caught up in one great throb of life. 
And he beheld her soft, firm moulded arm
Closely ensheathed adjust a truant curl
From the warm profile, then their eyes did meet

And her blood quickened so that once again
She took her mirror and with conscious poise
Of head and shoulders told him that she knew
How fair she was and how his blood was stirred
Just at the sight of her disdainful fingers.
Then she arose, passed to the centre aisle
And genuflected ; he watched her walk away
Proud and self-conscious of her exceeding beauty.
He followed to the porch and saw her step
Into a waiting car ; her dark eyes glowed
To feel his admiration though she showed
No sign she saw him save to loose her fur
Back from her slender, warm, and delicate throat.

She drove away and all was faded then,
The swift car dwindled and at once was gone ;
The street was empty, little heaps of rubbish
Sat vanishing by the side of empty gutters—
Dry, incoherent, dwindling back to space
In unobservant silence. Was it a Dream
That some few streets away the roaring traffic
Of living millions streamed incessantly ?
No, he could hear its hum, remote and dim,
Just like flies buzzing in that empty street,
Buzzing against the doors and the closed windows.
Not one door opened, no one ever came
Out of those buildings, those high blocks of flats
Of yellow bricks and dark bricks and cement.

He was alone, watching the dry dust dwindle,
Watching the crumbling shell of life departed,
Life that had gone and left the hollow sunshine,
The dust-heaps and the row of blistered doors.

Still he stood there and all was quiet about him.
Remote O how remote the long street seemed !
His heart stirred in him and a scrap of paper
Whirled in a corner, turning helplessly :
He felt as if thrust in some fourth dimension,
As if he'd accidentally uplifted
A back-cloth corner of the world's set stage
And looking behind the scenes had found no bustle,
No throng and tumult, no directing hand,
Only a little scrap of whirling paper,
And he himself, intense, and breathing hard,
Fixed, listening to his own heart's palpitation.

It was a moment only, one brief moment,
And then there glided, rumbling heavily,
A Dream from the other world, a Pickford van,
A coalescence of strange creaks and noises
That drew across his mind ; the Driver sat
A limp, bent figure with an open mouth,
A two-days beard and grime-ringed, vacant eyes,
Suspended o'er a ragged, ambling horse,

Rocked to the music of the jingling harness ;
While the wheels turning with a different motion
And the straps flapping, and the swaying Driver
All gave the semblance of a Dream, that faded—
Round the next corner—all was still again.

A Ride Through the World

I NTO a wood ride I,
Swathed in grey dreams,
Flickering around are beams
Strayed from the hidden sky.

Through that still wood I ride,
Hearing the silence-song,
Feeling the Shadows throng
Close to my very side.

Shadows and I we race
Through the dim trees,
Faintly the breeze
Shakes down the fine dusk-lace.

Softer than hair it falls
On branch and bole,
Netting my soul
With dwarf and giant thralls :

In its net drags my soul
With the dead leaves,
In eddied sheaves
Down the dim paths they roll.

Swifter the leaves I blow
Through the long avenues,
Through the dark avenues
Like a dry wind I go.

The Sky-sent Death

" A German aeroplane flew over Greek territory
dropping a bomb which killed a shepherd "

*SITTING on a stone a Shepherd,
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,
Under the high blue Attic sky ;
Along the green monotony
Grey sheep creeping, creeping.*

Deep down on the hill and valley,
At the bottom of the sunshine,
Like great Ships in clearest water,
Water holding anchored Shadows,
Water without wave or ripple,
Sunshine deep and clear and heavy,
Sunshine like a booming bell
Made of purest golden metal,
White Ships heavy in the sky
Sleep with anchored shadow.

Pipe a song in that still air
And the song would be of crystal
Snapped in silence, or a bronze vase
Smooth and graceful, curved and shining.

Tell an old tale or a history ;
It would seem a slow Procession
Full of gestures : limbs and torso
White and rounded in the sunlight.

*Sitting on a stone a Shepherd,
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,
Like a fragment of old marble
Dug up from the hillside shadow.*

In the sunshine deep and soundless
Came a faint metallic humming ;
In the sunshine clear and heavy
Came a speck, a speck of shadow—
Shepherd lift your head and listen,
Listen to that humming Shadow !

*Sitting on a stone the Shepherd,
Stone and Shepherd sleeping
In a sleep dreamless as water,
Water in a white glass beaker,
Clear, pellucid, without shadow ;
Underneath a sky-blue crystal
Sees his grey sheep creeping.*

In the sunshine clear and heavy
Shadow-fled a dark hand downward :
In the sunshine deep and soundless

Burst a star-dropt thing of thunder—
Smoked the burnt blue air's torn veiling
Drooping softly round the hillside.

Boomed the silence in returning
To the crater in the hillside,
To the red earth fresh and bleeding,
To the mangled heap remaining :
Far away that humming Shadow
Vanished in the azure distance.

*Sitting on a stone no Shepherd,
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,
But across the hill and valley .
Grey sheep creeping, creeping,
Standing carven on the sky-line,
Scattering in the open distance,
Free, in no man's keeping.*

Aeroplanes

*I*RON birds floating in the sky
Prey remorselessly
On the tiny, obscure dot
That is some great city,
Below, men-insects rend and tear,
Women wring hands of pity.

I have flown a hundred miles
Over the blurred plain,
Dropping devastation and death,
Blotting men's nerves with pain--
Their miserable cries were as tiny as insects'
Calling their God in vain.

The sounds of their oaths and lamentations
Could not even reach up to me,
The clouds were at peace, no tribulation
Disturbed the sky-harmony,
Only my buzzing engine clanged
And my heart beat dreadfully.

I laughed as I silently tossed blind Death
Down on that insect people,
Dreadful it was in the peaceful sky
To murder that insect people,
And never to hear a sound or cry
Or a bell toll in a steeple.

I laughed when my last bloody bomb had gone,
I shrieked high up in a cloud,
I wanted to fly in the face of their God
And spit my disdain aloud,
I ripped through the terrified whistling air
And burst through the earth's damp shroud.

Ah! it was blue there, wide and clear,
Dancing alive in the sun,
And millions of bright, sweet cymbals rang
Praising the deeds I had done,
And millions of angels cheering stood
Deep-columned around the Sun.

And then I stood erect and cheered,
Ay! shouted into the sky,
I filled the vast semicircle round
There was only the Sun and I,
The round, red, glittering, blazing Sun
And a fluttering human fly.

In Camp

SOME months of training filled his tall spare form,
Hardened his muscles, bronzed his face a warm
And healthy brown down to his lissom neck ;
And many a girl her wandering feet would check
Turning to look at him, but he went by
Ruled tyrant-wise by his fastidious eye :
A loosened strand of hair, a clumsy shoe,
An eager voice, too many or too few
Of all those cunning attributes of art
Which rouse the lolling hunter stopped his heart
From any quicker beating, froze his veins :
And walking in those silent country lanes
Close to his camp and nearer to the Moon,
Hanging up there like a great red balloon
Come from another world, he felt so fit
That he could almost put his arms around it
And drag it down to kick it from the ground
Bouncing through space. If he like Jacob found
An Angel in his way, O he'd rejoice,
Fall on him without warning, grip him round,
And crush delirious life in his white arms !
(If only he came, beautiful and vast,
Towering beneath the sky, like a ship's mast,
With face averted, filling the night with awe
And silent worship !)

A deepening ecstasy
Of infinite power moved in that lampless road,
From him upsoaring silently it flowed
Vainly athwart the sky, it could not find
Any resistance, aught that it might bind
Of man or spirit. O how he could crush
The pigmy world between his knuckles, push
Mountains into the sea !—And then he sees
A little wood, goes in among the trees,
Puts his arms round one giant beechwood trunk
And leans his cheek against its smooth face, sunk
In a sudden pit of sorrow so that his tears
Run slowly down, until at length he hears
The ever-gentle shaking of the leaves
Patient above him. “O you little leaves
That I would slowly kiss, ay, one by one,
For joy of your sweet ministering that’s done
So gently, so remotely, so thought-free—
Only a trembling summer ecstasy,
A faint delight to find itself astir,
Rapt awe of its own freedom—if I err
In thinking of a beauty less than yours
Return into my soul as water pours
Into a waiting pool, your image there
Unveil and I from lesser dreams shall wake,
Shall bathe my body in cold water pure
And find again the chaste and fleeting lure
Of Beauty inexpressible, that dies

About the sunset, and at morning flies
Across the hill-tops, hovers in the eyes
Of maidens innocent but wild as stars
Caught in the mesh of great celestial wars."

The mood had passed, he walked back to the camp,
On either side Trees waved great arms about him,
Vague Shapes enmeshed his path, and distant cries
From bird and beast went to and fro i' the night.
The wind played with the shadows, danced around,
Flapped in his face, flew out of the sky
And left a ragged, hushed monotony
Of cloud, and hedge, and hill-top ; then it crept
Secretly round his feet, and sighed and moaned,
And shook the flowers that slept in all the ditches,
Ruffled the dreamy pools that lay fatigued
White shining faces dead-beat on the road,
Pale straggling soldiers from some weary army
Whose countenances lit up by the Moon
Will haunt for long the swaying, moaning landscape
Rocked with its stones through dreams of endless
marches,
Marches towards other ghost-like, marching faces,
Assaults and bivouacs, and myriad bayonets
Spectrally gleaming in the light of Moons
And flaming Suns come out of heaven to watch them,
To watch their battles with those hosts of shadow
That fade and quiver in a dream-like scene,

Striking their glimmering tents before the dawn
And gliding out of the world, away from Time
Into the lap of unresisting seas,
Like a vast snowflake-fading population.
Ay, how that wind that idly flapped in space
Emptied the earth of life, and left him rigid
Like a gaunt Tree whose leaves are blown to tatters
Writhing and twisting on a sapless scarecrow,
While swallow-thoughts are darting in his brain
As though they were the fallen leaves of Summer
Scattered, wind-gathered from the floor of forests,
To fill a distant sky with fluttering curves.
A cloud slips by the Moon, the creaking boughs
Wave over him as out his shadow jumps
Hunch-backed upon the road, and goes with him
Unto the door of his now dim-seen hut
Leaving him to the darkness and the breathing
Of outstretched Forms as of some strange com-
panions
Projecting in that moon-white, windy world.

The Cattle lying in a grass dim meadow
Have ceased to ruminate, their dark heads sculp-
tured
Can only be imagined in the darkness,
Solid, unblinking, like a hundred Hathors
Dreaming above the scented fields of Ur—
Their senses drowned with smell of many harvests

Ere Pharaoh or the forefathers of Abraham—
What misty visions stream along their veins
Of luscious river-banks and swishing tails,
Man drawing rudely with a pointed stone
Their shape on cave-walls, or in drilled battalions
Trampling the Sussex meadows, still in need
Of those unwieldy, massive Shapes that body
All the lush, fruitful pouring of the Sun,
All the strong sweetness of earth's rippling waters,
Vast carcasses of mottled sun and shadow
Sucked out of mud like flowers and toppling trees
To move to each vibration of the Dawn
And know the Evening and the rush of stars,
And wait like carven statues from the past,
Set in the fields, the patient slaves of men,
Who couching in a thousand mushroom huts
Lie strewn around and go on bleak adventures
Through lands of sleep lit by no travelling Moon !

Song : The Far-off Princess

A LITTLE silkworm is spinning
A robe for a far-off Princess,
A foaming wave of yellow
'Mid the wood's green nakedness :

It is her hair it is spinning
As fine as a morning mist
That washes the pale gold sunshine
From mountains of amethyst.

The far-off Princess she is lying
With only a greenwood dress,
By the side of a fallen Fountain—
The Fountain of All-when-ness :

It is deep in the greenwood forest,
It is close by a greenwood tree,
Far-off gleam the amethyst mountains
And the amethystine sea.

Magic

I LOVE a still conservatory
That's full of giant, breathless palms,
Azaleas, clematis and vines,
Whose quietness great Trees becalms
Filling the air with foliage,
A curved and dreamy statuary.

I like to hear a cold, pure rill
Of water trickling low, afar
With sudden little jerks and purls
Into a tank or stoneware jar,
The song of a tiny sleeping bird
Held like a shadow in its trill.

I love the mossy quietness
That grows upon the great stone flags,
The dark tree-ferns, the staghorn ferns,
The prehistoric, antlered stags
That carven stand and stare among
The silent, ferny wilderness.

And are they birds or souls that flit
Among the trees so silently,
And are they fish or ghosts that haunt
The still pools of the rockery !—
For I am but a sculptured rock
As in that magic place I sit.

Still as a great jewel is the air
 With boughs and leaves smooth-carved in it,
And rocks and trees and giant ferns,
 And blooms with inner radiance lit,
And naked water like a nymph
 That dances tireless slim and bare.

I watch a white Nyanza float
 Upon a green, untroubled pool,
A fairyland Ophelia, she
 Has cast herself in water cool,
And lies while fairy cymbals ring
 Drowned in her fairy castle moat.

The goldfish sing a winding song
 Below her pale and waxen face,
The water-nymph is dancing by
 Lifting smooth arms with mournful grace,
A stainless white dream she floats on
 While fairies beat a fairy gong.

Silent the Cattleyas blaze
 And thin red orchid shapes of Death
Peer savagely with twisted lips
 Sucking an eerie, phantom breath
With that bright, spotted, fever'd lust
 That watches lonely travellers craze.

Gigantic, mauve and hairy leaves
Hang like obliterated faces
Full of dim unattained expression
Such as haunts virgin forest places
When Silence leaps among the trees
And the echoing heart deceives.

Sea-madness

THE glimmering voice of the sea
Is caught in the shadowed land,
A bird netted ; mournfully
It flutters in vain to be free,
It is fluttering hopelessly
Along the edge of sand.

The silver shells of the sea
Agape and hollow roar,
Devils cast up by the sea,
Blinking and silvery
In a moon-white ecstasy
They lie and bellow and roar :

They roar at the glimmering Moon,
They roar for ever afraid
Of the hollow empty world
Where they have been suddenly hurled
Out of the full peace furled
In the dim sea where they were laid.

And the Stranger that walks by the sea
Watching the bright waves curled
With songs of sweet ecstasy,
With harping and minstrelsy,

With clouds riding silently
Will wander out of the world :

Alone the Moon will hover
Above the glimmering shore,
His soul will be hollowed under
To a conch dinned thin with thunder
And his body lying asunder
Where the silver shells roar :

His body silvered over
By the Moon and the flowing tide,
And his hair with sea-weed streaming,
And the whites of his eyeballs gleaming,
And a smooth sea sleepily dreaming,
Lapping against his side.

Hollyhocks

(The Hollyhock is the holy mallow, brought by
Crusaders from the Holy Land)

I LIE in bed and count the stars
Through a window in the wall,
They are far away and small,
Lilliputian, folk-tale stars.

Where I am it is quite still,
O and it is far and far
Where those dreaming stars are,
Out beyond the window-sill.

But the garden warm with rain
Blows into my hollow room,
Great boughs slip dew-loads of gloom,
To sparkle jubilant again.

Trees and shrubs and plants and flowers
Drink the glimmering spirit-rain,
Sing unto the stars that wane
Through the wet, delirious hours ;

Roses red, star-drunken reel
Over trim white garden paths,
White roses in the trellis laths
Glowing bosoms half reveal ;

Naiad-blue, frail, dancing bells
Ring a jingle-jingle rhyme
Faint upon the edge of thyme,
And the proud, plump lily swells.

Iris like a goddess bold
Purple drapes her beauty so
That her magic men may know
From her still pool rising cold ;

Scarlet Salvias swoon and drift
Heavy with their maddening bloom,
Silver sanctuaries of gloom
Their heads the dew-sheathed peonies lift.

These drunken Pagans sing all night,
All but an enchanted row
Of hollyhocks that grow and grow
By the house-wall out of sight.

Not a sound or note they make,
But they're growing, growing fast,
Skywards they are marching, past
Pinks and foxgloves in their wake.

Pilgrim soldiers you I fear
In the midnight deep and still
As you mount the dark blue hill
Of the steep sky shining clear :

Your marching is an awful hymn
In the garden of delight,
In the mad, delirious night,
Giant and lonely Cherubim !

When the Sun comes you shall show
Great white wings and nimbus gold,
And your glory we'll behold
From the garden far below.

Clapham Common

(Or "The Cap of Liberty")

SEE the cock on one leg standing
With his diamond eye
Underneath his red cap hanging
Sidewards jauntily,
See him strut and pause surveying
Life monarchically.

What is it his eye discovers,
What horizon fills
That round gaze so bright, so burnished,
What communication thrills
All the fiery red and blackness
Blooming on his quills ?

Not a tiger, not a lion,
Not an eastern potentate,
Not a prophet out of Zion,
Not a western magnate
Gazed with such an agate vision
Outward upon fate !

Watch him slowly put his foot down :
Such deliberation,
The like of it was never found
In councils of a nation—
No emperor had such a mien
At his coronation.

Broods he there on ancient glory
By the holy river,
When he perched among the tree-tops
And the silver shiver
Of the moonlight falling stirred that
Jewelled bird aquiver ?

Beadily the Moon reflected
That round staring eye,
Watching all the forest murder—
Spotted tigers drifting by,
Hooded serpents, elephants
Sharpening curves of ivory.

Dim and wonderful that forest
In the moonlight melody,
All its dream leaf-cymbals ringing
As in whitest ecstasy
Glides the river, a moon-spirit
Through the forest shadowy.

Perched up high within the branches,
Black as night without a star,
Red as pools of blood in moonlight,
Silent as great flowers are
Dreamed the violent, clanging sun-birds
Lustrous and bizarre.

Still he hears the glimmering river
Bubbling from the Moon,
And the insane, glittering forest
Shriek like a baboon
Dancing in a ring of white flowers
In the sky aswoon :

The white, the dim, tranced flowers of heaven
Naked, houri-pale they drift,
In the forest sleep their shadows,
Ghosts of gold the tigers lift
Their great heads by the cool moonbeam
Running through the forest swift.

Lilies, lilies, dreams of lilies,
Spectral orchids faint and dim,
Globular bright fruits hang ghostly
From his round eye's reddened rim,
In that tiny, glittering circle
Stars and Moon and Forest swim.

Gone is all that pageant beauty,
Gone the forest's lyric song,
The Hosannas of the lotus,
Trumpetings of mammoths strong,
And the crying of the tigers
The dense banks of the Moon along !

Gone the panting, silent madness
Of love hunting magical,
Gone the soft and dreamy singing
Of still boughs fantastical,
Gone the slim white running rivers
In the gloom monastical !

Gone the spirits dark and chattering
Flitting through the countless trees,
Trooping slim, grotesque and agile
Hand in hand in companies ;
Gone the distant, mournful tom-tom
Of some village mysteries !

Now a poor, bedraggled prisoner
With a proud and mournful mien,
Living on a far-off memory,
Magnificence he ne'er has seen,
Two things only still remaining
Of the glory that has been :

The Moon that climbs o'er miles of houses
White and pitiful,
Floods the narrow green with splendour :
He stands sorrowful,
Lonely in the hollow circle
Of that vision wonderful.

Slowly in the east arises
Like a Dream the ancient Sun,
From within him bubbles upward
That loud hymn which once begun
Made blood-bright the dusky forest,
Golden all its rivers run.

Now the battled blood-red ruin,
Now the clouds of agony,
All earth's chanting, all earth's dying
Flame in that red eye
Underneath its scarlet hanging
Cap of liberty.

And he chants forgotten splendours,
Chants of glory come again,
All the Mountains round him singing,
Ringing cymbals Sky and Plain
Blaring to omnipotent tyrants
Their omnipotent disdain.

Dream that I press . . .

DREAM that I press against my bosom, stay !
Fade not again into the thinning air
Leaving my arms about thy counterfeit fair,
Thy human sister warm, with tumbling hair,
And lips that cling to mine already grey—

Grey with the whitening ashes of despair,
Whom no red curving harps can touch to joy ;
Passive as marble, as a carved Greek boy
Cold in the tender sunlight, cold to the coy
Witchery of warm arms and bosom bare.

My eyes into the empty distance stare,
Drinking the lingering brightness, ray by ray,
The glimmering memory on a summer day
Of a bright Fountain ; soon it fades away,
Vanishing in the still, invisible air.

Thou art before me shrunk to common day.
I kiss thee humbly, fearful lest I wrong
Thy delicate spirit ; but the enchanted song
Of my heart's vision departing leaves along
My aching soul a singing pilgrim way.

I am a Hunter

I AM a hunter after wayward words
That I may press them into service meet
For their rare beauty. I would have them greet
My lady proudly, flashing like white swords
Drawn in the dark of silence. Also I seek
Among the shadows of the syllables,
Among sweet ringing vowels, that spell of spells
Which gravely said will bring unto her cheek
The crimson heart's blood. Even, O dumb night,
Do I desire to capture thy deep sounds,
Those that in darkness wander, long, black hounds
Chasing the stars their quarry, dead to sight,
With baying dead to keenest mortal ears,
Softer than voices stilled or the quiet splash of tears.

The Body

THE body is a fragile Tree
That blooms by the highway,
The wind of life blows sorrowfully,
The mortal Trees decay,
But there is always a frail Tree
Blooming beside the way.

Old bodies are old gnarled Trees
That Time has gashed and bent,
They have a wrinkled countenance,
Their vigour has been spent,
And you may see from bough and twig
The way the spirit went.

Young bodies they are saplings straight,
They gleam as columned fire,
As torches in the mournful wind,
The dark wind of desire,
They glimmer in the gloom of Death,
They are Life's trembling pyre.

And Love is a strange shadow bright
Of an immortal Tree,
A gleaming on the dark, red wind,
The wind of ecstasy
Blowing upon the great highway
With gloomy minstrelsy.

Song

THE days pass and no one knoweth their beauty,
 Silently they slip away :
In the darkness they are born, cradled by the
 crumbling hills,
Breathing a fragrance into the sky and awaking the
 tiny heart of a bird,
A bird hidden away somewhere in a wood,
A bird swallowed in a deep darkness :
A shadow among shadows.

Sing O tiny heart, sing a song of gladness,
Rejoice for the loveliness of dawn !

I have been asleep when the days came,
The beautiful days, the days that are no more ;
I have not seen them crowd the sky with a pale
 loveliness—
Their shy grey feet touching the crumbling hills ;
I have not felt their quiet and tender fragrance ;
I did not know their peace and their gentleness,
But I have watched them departing sorrowfully in
 the west.

Yes, I have watched them but their faces were turned
 from me,

And the glory of them has stunned me, I have been
amazed at my loss,
I never knew they were with me, I had not thought
they were so lovely—
O that I could bring them back ! Alas ! Alas !

The days pass and no one knoweth their beauty,
Silently they slip away.

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